

## WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, today is World Press Freedom Day, a time set aside to honor the work and sacrifice of journalists around the world. I believe that freedom of the press is vital to American national security and to our democracy here at home.

Today, my colleague from Indiana, Mr. PENCE, and Senators CHRIS DODD and RICHARD LUGAR joined me in launching a new bipartisan, bicameral caucus aimed at advancing press freedom around the world. The Congressional Caucus for Freedom of the Press creates a forum where the United States Congress can work to combat and condemn media censorship and the persecution of journalists around the world. The launch of this new caucus sends a strong message that Congress will defend democratic values and human rights wherever they are threatened.

This evening, Mr. PENCE and I hosted an event here in the Capitol to celebrate World Press Freedom Day. We were honored by the presence of Musa Klebnikov, the widow of murdered American journalist Paul Klebnikov, the editor of Forbes Russia who was gunned down on a Moscow street in July of 2004. A Moscow court is due to hand down a verdict against the alleged triggermen tomorrow, and Mrs. Klebnikov spoke movingly about continuing her late husband's work of helping the Russian people by working with them to build an independent press.

In launching this new caucus, we have been encouraged by the wide range of organizations and individuals such as Reporters without Borders, Freedom House, and the Committee to Protect Journalists, which have all enthusiastically endorsed this effort. But I was most gratified to receive a letter of support this morning from Walter Cronkite, the longtime CBS News anchor who is not only an American icon but a living symbol of the positive force that journalists can have in shaping our lives.

Freedom of the press is so central to our democracy that the Framers enshrined it in the first amendment of our Constitution. At the time, there was little in the way of journalistic ethics; and newspapers were filled with scurrilous allegations leveled at public figures. Even so, our Founders understood its importance to advancing our experiment in democracy.

Throughout our history, journalists have jealously guarded their rights and American courts have, in the main, carved out broad protections for the press. In the United States, the press operates almost as a fourth branch of government, the Fourth Estate, as it is called, independent of the other three and positioned as watchdogs of our freedom.

The United States, as the world's oldest democracy and its greatest champion, has a special obligation to defend the rights of journalists wherever and whenever they are threatened. A free press is one of the most powerful forces for advancing democracy, human rights, and economic development, so our commitment to these larger objectives requires active engagement in the protection and the promotion of this freedom.

These are difficult and dangerous days for reporters around the world. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, 47 journalists were killed in 2005, most of whom were murdered to silence or punish them. While last year's death toll was lower than the 57 deaths in 2004, they were well above the yearly average over the last two decades. But too many have paid the ultimate price just for doing their jobs.

Daniel Pearl was the Wall Street Journal's South Asia bureau chief and was on his way to an interview with a supposed terrorist leader when, on January 23, 2002, he was kidnapped by a militant group that claimed that he was a spy. For weeks, speculation persisted about his fate, until his decapitated body was found in a shallow grave outside Karachi in late February.

In Algeria, Mr. Mohamed Boualem Benchicou, the former editor of *Le Matin*, was given a 2-year prison sentence for being too outspoken.

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He has been held in El Harrach prison for the past year as his health deteriorates and members of his newspaper staff are routinely subject to interrogation by Algerian authorities and also to judicial harassment.

Raul Rivero Castaneda is one of Cuba's best known dissident journalists. Over the years, Mr. Rivero has paid dearly for his commitment to providing Cuban citizens with independent, unbiased information. In March 2003, Rivero was arrested and charged with "acting against Cuban independence and attempting to divide Cuban territorial integrity," writing "against the government," organizing "subversive meetings," and collaborating with U.S. diplomats. Sentenced to 20 years in jail, he served 8 months before being allowed to seek asylum in Spain in April 2005.

These are just some of the journalists that our caucus will highlight and profile to bring attention to those brave, committed members of the press around the world who are fighting for the freedom of all of us and to highlight those countries where press freedom is under attack. We welcome all of your membership in this caucus.

#### THE INVASION OF AMERICA— TEXAS SPEAKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOHMERT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I have received numerous correspondence in the last 24 hours regarding the unlawful invasion into the United States. Here is what some Texans are saying.

Heather Pritchett in Humble, Texas, says: "Illegal immigrants should be sent home and required to follow the same immigration laws as legal immigrants have faced. It is wrong to give illegal immigrants legal status, even with several requirements such as learning English, essentially it says it is okay to ignore the law. An open door immigration policy is one of the wonderful things about this country and it should continue, but please close the windows."

Jeffrey Kendrick of Spring, Texas, writes: "Why do we allow illegals to choose what laws are okay to disregard? As an American citizen who served our country for over 10 years in active military duty, this makes my blood boil. Why aren't we enforcing the laws that are already on the laws? Are there other laws that are okay to break? Why should our representatives in Washington allow our country to be overrun with people who have no regard for the law? Stand up for our country. I have always respected your record and valued your opinion. Don't let the country be sold out to whining liberals who are afraid of what illegal aliens may think of them. Who cares what they think? Go after companies that employ them illegally, enforce the law, preserve the American way of life."

Robert Arnold in Atascocita, Texas, writes: "It is amazing to see so many people mock our government while breaking the American law. As a citizen, as a veteran, I would like to know what plan is on the drawing board to stop the inflow of illegal activities at the borders. At the very least, make those people pay taxes. I don't even care about the \$3 a gallon gasoline, but work to get this immigration issue under control."

Zine Strong of Humble, Texas, writes: "I am appalled at what is happening in our country where it appears that illegal immigrants have more rights than American citizens. I see daily on television the plight of those who live at the border. Their properties are vandalized, their lives are threatened by those crossing the border illegally. Our school and health systems are stretched to the limit and the jails are filled with people who have no right to be here in the first place."

"I am an immigrant myself who was blessed to have the privilege of becoming an American citizen. I came to this country legally many years ago with my two small daughters. As soon as we arrived, my daughters were enrolled in a school so they could learn English and we spoke only English at home. My sister, who had sponsored us, took us to McDonald's and told my daughters they could not be Americans unless they ate hamburgers and drank Coca-Cola. Five years later we became American citizens."